

Remarks on Security Assistance to Ukraine and an Exchange With Reporters
January 25, 2023

The President. Good "almost" morning. It's not—it's actually noon. Thank you for being here.

Yesterday marked 11 months since Russia's brutal, full-scale invasion of Ukraine; 11 months in which the Ukrainian people have showed Putin and the world the full force of their courage and the indomitable determination to live free.

And through every single step of this horrific war, the American people have been strong and unwavering in their support. And Democrats and Republicans in Congress have stood together. The United States has worked in lockstep with our allies and partners around the world to make sure that the Ukrainian people are in the strongest possible position to defend their nation, their families, and against the brutal—the truly brutal aggression of Russia. We haven't seen the likes of this in a long time.

The United States and Europe are fully united. This morning I had a long conversation with our NATO allies—German Chancellor Scholz, French President Macron, Prime Minister Sunak, and the Italian Prime Minister, Meloni—to continue our close coordination in our full support of Ukraine. Because you all know—I've been saying this a long time—the expectation on the part of Russia is we're going to break up, we're not going to stay united. But we are fully, thoroughly, totally united.

With spring approaching, Ukrainian forces are working to defend the territory they hold and preparing for additional counteroffensives. To liberate their land, they need to be able to counter Russia's evolving tactics and strategy on the battlefield in the very near term. They need to improve their ability to maneuver in open terrain. And they need an enduring capability to deter and defend against Russian aggression over the long term.

The Secretary of State and the Secretary of the—of the military are behind me. Are—they—they've been deeply, deeply involved in this—this whole effort. Armored capability, as General Austin will tell you—is—has been critical. And that's why the United States has committed hundreds of armored fighting vehicles to date, including more than 500 as part of the assistance package we announced last Friday.

And today I'm announcing that the United States will be sending 31 Abram tanks to Ukraine, the equivalent of one Ukrainian battalion. Secretary Austin has recommended this step because it will enhance the Ukraine's capacity to defend its territory and achieve its strategic objectives.

The Abrams tanks are the most capable tanks in the world. They're also extremely complex to operate and maintain, so we're also giving Ukraine the parts and equipment necessary to effectively sustain these tanks on the battlefield. And we begin—we'll begin to train the Ukrainian troops on these issues of sustainment, logistics, and maintenance as soon as possible.

Delivering these tanks to the field is going to take time, time that we'll see—we'll use to make sure the Ukrainians are fully prepared to integrate the Abram tanks into their defenses.

We're also closely coordinated this announcement with our allies. The American contribution will be joined by an additional announcement, including that will be readily available and more easily integrated for use on the battlefield in the coming weeks and months from other countries.

I'm grateful to Chancellor Scholz for providing German Leopard 2 tanks and will lead an effort to organize the European contribution of two tank battalions for Ukraine. I want to thank the Chancellor for his leadership and his steadfast commitment to our collective efforts to support Ukraine. Germany has really stepped up, and the Chancellor has been a strong, strong voice for unity—a close friend—and for the level of effort we're going to continue.

Supporting Ukraine's ability to fight off Russian aggression to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity is a worldwide commitment. Not just—it's worldwide commitment.

Last week, Germany—in Germany, Secretary Austin convened the Ukraine Defense Contact Group for the eighth time. This group is made up of some 50 nations—50 nations—each making significant contributions of their own to Ukraine's integrity, each fully committed to making Ukraine remain strong and independent and able to defend itself against Russian threats and violence. I want to thank every member of that coalition for continuing to step up.

The U.K.—the United Kingdom—recently announced that it's donating Challenger 2 tanks to Ukraine. France is contributing AMX-10s, armored fighting vehicles.

In addition to the Leopard tanks that Germany, like the United States, is also—Germany is also sending a Patriot missile battery. The Netherlands is donating a Patriot missile and launchers. France, Canada, the U.K., Slovakia, Norway, and others have all donated critical air defense systems to help secure Ukrainian skies and save the lives of innocent civilians who are literally the target—the target—of Russia's aggression.

Poland is sending armored vehicles. Sweden is donating infantry fighting vehicles. Italy is giving artillery. Denmark and Estonia are sending howitzers. Latvia is providing more Stinger missiles. Lithuania is providing anti-aircraft guns. And Finland recently announced its largest package of security assistance to date.

You may remember, when I was asked a while ago, what did I think was going to happen. And I said—I let Putin know. He thought that he was going to have—end up with the Finlandization [Finlandization; White House correction] of Europe. Well, he's got the NATO-ization of Finland. He's gotten something that he never intended.

Together with our allies and partners, we've sent more than 3,000 armored vehicles, more than 8,000 [800; White House correction] artillery systems, more than 2 million rounds of artillery ammunition, and more than 50 advanced, multilaunch rocket systems, antiship and air defense systems, all to help counter Ukraine's [Ukraine counter; White House correction] brutal aggression that is happening because of Russia.

And look, today's announcement builds on the hard work and commitment from countries around the world, led by the United States of America, to help Ukraine defend its sovereignty and its territorial integrity.

That's what this is about: helping Ukraine defend and protect Ukrainian land. It is not an offensive threat to Russia. We are—there is no offensive threat to Russia. If Russian troops returned to Russia, they'll be there for—where they belong, and this war would be over today. That's what we all want: an end to this war in just and lasting terms.

You know, our teams do not permit one nation—we're not going to allow one nation to steal a neighbor's territory by force. Our terms that preserve Russia's sovereign—Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and honor the U.N. Charter, that's our—they're the terms we're working on. And you know, these are—these the terms we all signed up for and 143 nations voted for in the United Nations General Assembly last October.

So the United States, standing shoulder to shoulder with our allies and partners, is going to continue to do all we can to support Ukraine.

Putin expected Europe and the United States to weaken our resolve. He expected our support for Ukraine to crumble with time. He was wrong. He was wrong. And he was wrong from the beginning, and he continues to be wrong.

We are united. America is united, and so is the world. And we approach the 1-year mark—as we do—of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, we remain as united and determined as ever in our conviction and our cause. These tanks are further evidence of our enduring and unflagging commitment to Ukraine and our confidence in the skill of the Ukrainian forces.

As I told President Zelenskyy when he was here—and today is his birthday, by the way—in December: We're with you for as long as it takes, Mr. President. Ukrainians are fighting an age-old battle against aggression and domination. It's a battle Americans have fought proudly time and again, and it's a battle we're going to make sure the Ukrainians are well equipped to fight as well.

This is about freedom: freedom for Ukraine, freedom everywhere. It's about the kind of world we want to live in and the world we want to leave our children.

So may God protect the brave Ukrainian defenders of their country who keep the flame of liberty burning brightly as we can.

Thank you.

Germany

Q. Mr. President, why are you taking this decision now? Did Germany force you to change your mind on sending tanks? [*Laughter*]

The President. Germany didn't force me to change my mind. We wanted to make sure we were all together. And that's what we were going to do all along, and that's what we're doing right now.

Thank you.

Q. Mr. President, any response to the Pence disclosures of classified documents?

Q. Sir, are the searches of your homes completed?

Q. Mr. President, when is Jeff Zients starting as your next Chief of Staff?

Q. Will you search Rehoboth?

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:01 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin, III. Reporters referred to former Vice President Michael R. Pence; and former White House COVID-19 Response Coordinator Jeffrey D. Zients.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Ukraine, security assistance; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House.

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Names: Austin, Lloyd J., III; Blinken, Antony J.; Macron, Emmanuel; Meloni, Giorgia; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Scholz, Olaf; Sunak, Rishi; Zelenskyy, Volodymyr.

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